

This Week in Congress
March 6, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Pressing Ambassador of Japan to Reopen Market to U.S. Beef

On Wednesday I met with the Ambassador of Japan, Ryozi Kato, to press the Japanese to reopen its market to U.S. beef. I requested the meeting to question the Ambassador about when American beef can be expected back in Japan. Japan closed its market in January - only one month after reopening it - when ineligible veal was discovered in a shipment from New York.

I was assured by the Ambassador that the Japanese are not intentionally taking steps to delay the process. They are now examining the findings of the USDA report and then will respond to USDA with any questions they have. I was pleased to learn that the Japanese are not re-referring this matter to the Food Safety Commission as they had done after the original closing of the market. Hopefully this will help expedite the process.

The last thing our farmers and ranchers need right now is for the Japanese market to remain closed. We have been patient, but that is at an end. It is time for Japan to abide by its agreement. They have no reason for concern with the quality of U.S. cattle or the safety of our beef.

Kansas City Corps of Engineers Assures They Will Do Better in Salina

Colonel Michael Rossi and Steve Iverson of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers visited Washington, D.C., this week to talk about the City of Salina and the old Schilling Air Force Base. The Corps has spent \$18 million studying and cleaning up the former military base. Last week at a meeting in Salina, a report from an environmental investigation firm hired by the City of Salina was released saying the contamination could reach the city's water supply in eight years rather than the 75 years estimated by the Corps.

By law, the Army Corps of Engineers has responsibility to clean up former military installations that have environmental contamination. The Colonel assured me the Corps recognizes its responsibilities at Salina. They want to resolve this matter and indicated the process will be expedited. The Corps has agreed to meet with Salina officials to further discuss this issue.

It is still troublesome to me that there remains a lot of bureaucracy in this process, but we hope we have the Corps' attention and that the necessary actions will be taken to clean up the Schilling site and protect the Salina water supply.

House Agriculture Committee Holds California and Nebraska Farm Bill Hearings

On Friday and Saturday I attended the House Agriculture Committee's third and fourth farm bill field hearings. Hearings were conducted in Stockton, California, and Nebraska City, Nebraska. The plan is to have 11 committee hearings across the country as we prepare to draft the 2007 farm bill.

Eleven members of the Committee were in California to hear from producers about a variety of farm policy issues including specialty crops, commodity programs, export markets, planting prohibition, environmental and land use restrictions, and crop insurance. It was important for the Committee to make this trip west to hear from these producers due to the size and diversity of the California agriculture industry.

On Saturday we were back in the Midwest in Nebraska City, Nebraska, to hear from Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and Iowa agricultural producers. Twelve members of the Committee attended the hearing to learn about commodity programs, the farm economy, renewable energy, rural development and conservation.

Justin Knopf, a 26-year-old wheat, sorghum, soybean, corn and alfalfa producer from Gypsum, testified about the challenges facing young farmers and ranchers. Justin provided a unique perspective about the role of the next farm bill and its consequences to the next generation of agricultural producers. Rarely do we have an occupation in which sons and daughters, moms and dads, and grandparents work side by side. We need to write farm policy that allows this in the future.

Justin represented Kansans extremely well and impressed my colleagues on the Committee. You can read his testimony via the House Agriculture Committee website at <http://agriculture.house.gov/hearings/109/h60304w3.pdf>.

Discussing the Farm Bill at the 104th National Farmers Union Convention

On Sunday I joined Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) and ranking member Collin Peterson (D-MN) for a roundtable discussion at the 104th National Farmers Union Convention in Denver. The theme of the convention was Fuels from the Farm - Our Nation's Future.

We discussed the upcoming 2007 Farm Bill and the implications of the negotiations occurring with the World Trade Organization. I emphasized the necessity of drafting a farm bill written for farmers, not trade negotiators. We need to write a farm bill that benefits American agriculture and then expect our negotiators to defend and support policy in world trade negotiations.

I enjoyed meeting with the Kansans attending the convention. The delegates included Don Teske, Kansas NFU President, and Darrell Larson of McPherson, Emil Mushrush of Strong City, Tom Giessel of Larned, John Strunk of Wichita, Lisa Teske of Cimarron, Linda Hessman of Dodge City, Raymond and Joan Schmitz of Seneca, and Don and Geneva Turnquist of Lindsborg.

Agriculture Subcommittee Reviews Effects of River Rises on Crop Insurance

This week I chaired a hearing of the Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management in Jefferson City, Missouri, to review how plans for a spring rise on the Missouri River will affect crop insurance policies of area farmers.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently released their 2006 plan which includes a spring rise on the Missouri River in March and May to comply with the Endangered Species Act. The Corp is responsible for operating the river reservoir system for irrigation, water supply, and fish and wildlife.

The Subcommittee heard from three panels of witnesses, including Eldon Gould, Administrator of USDA's Risk Management Agency, which administers federal crop insurance programs and only mandates coverage for disasters associated with natural events. Some producers expressed concern that the increased water levels may lead to damages to agricultural land that would not be covered by crop insurance since the scheduled spring rise is considered a man-made event.

Crop insurance is an integral part of farming. The program has been improved and it is the role of my Subcommittee to make sure the program better meets the needs of producers in the efforts to assure a secure food supply and a stable rural economy.

Celebrating Read Across America at McKinley Elementary School in Abilene

The annual Read Across America program was sponsored this week by the Kansas National Education Association (KNEA) to emphasize the importance of reading and to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Seuss. KNEA provided me with a Dr. Seuss book that I donated to McKinley Elementary School in Abilene where I read to third grade students. Reading is important in all stages of life and especially in the lives of children as they explore and excel in school. I appreciate KNEA's support of this program and am grateful to Kathy Horan, third grade teacher, and Tom Schwartz, principal, at McKinley Elementary.

From Hope to Paradise: Continuing My Big First Listening Tour

As part of my Big First Tour, I will be in Larned this evening attending the Ft. Larned Lions Club meeting. The Lions Club meeting is open to the public beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Joe Brenner Room at St. Joseph Memorial Hospital, 923 Carroll Avenue. Next Monday I will be making downtown stops in Scott City in Scott County and Dighton in Lane County. Visit my website at www.house.gov/moranks01/ for times and locations of the remaining stops of my Big First Listening Tour, scheduled to end in Paradise on Friday, March 24.

In the Office

Mike Friesen of Meade and Riley Walters of El Dorado were in my office this week to discuss their concerns with funding for the Noxious Weed Control and Eradication Act of 2004. In from the office of Governor Kathleen Sebelius were Troy Findley, Chief of Staff, and Jeremy Anderson, Policy Director, to provide an update on problems the state is having with the implementation of Medicare Part D and to express concern about the amount of the Kansas National Guard's equipment that is deployed overseas.

Shelley Duncan of Wichita was in to talk about Youthville's Dodge City Campus. Youthville is Kansas' lead contract agency for all foster care services in the Wichita area. The Dodge City location serves about 80 children. Kenny Gorman of Topeka, James Morton of Dodge City, Rick Moscicki of Wichita and Scott Howard of Kansas City were in my office representing the Kansas Fraternal Order of Police to advocate for various pieces of legislation aimed at improving the benefits of law enforcement officers. The officers also shared accounts on the problem of methamphetamine production and talked about possible solutions for getting this drug off our streets.

In this week to discuss a number of issues regarding veterans' benefits and healthcare were representatives from the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV). In representing the American Legion were Chuck Yunker of Tecumseh, Lee Stolfus of Emporia, David Warnken of Hutchinson, Elgin Wahlborg of Arkansas City, Frances Swensen of Junction City, Gwen Trost of Concordia, Beulah Shafer of Winfield, Jim Tull of Wichita, and Jacob Held and Mike Helm of Norcatur. In from Salina with the DAV were Charlie Stephens, Jason Huscher, James Price and Ellen Price. In from Wichita were Franklin Bergquist, Ardith Dillard, Charles Lovings, Elizabeth Lovings, Julius Williams, Erma Williams and Veronica Bergquist. Clifford Dillard of Colwich, David Brader of Parsons, Christian Kramer of Topeka, Steve Henre of Kansas City, James Morton of Dodge City and Floyd Britting of El Dorado were also in with the DAV group.

Chris Tilden, Director of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Office of Local and Rural Health; Gloria Vermie, Director of Rural Health Programs; Jodi Schmidt, Vice President of Hays Medical Center; and Chad Austin, Vice President for Government Affairs for the Kansas Hospital Association, were in town for the National Rural Health Policy Institute. They visited my office to discuss federal funding for rural health programs.

Roland Rhodes of Gardner was in representing the National Pest Management Association to talk about legislative priorities, including the Pest Management and Fire Suppression Flexibility Act and the Small Business Health Act. Jim and Debbie Brown of Wichita and Gloria Homeier-Schwien and Deseree Homeier of Russell were in to share their support for the Consumer Rental Purchase Agreement Act.

Colleen Boxberger of Russell, Mary Gaffey of Eureka and Marilyn Mahan of El Dorado were in my office representing the National Court Reporters Association to discuss the need to increase closed captioners and realtime reporters. Over 28 million Americans are deaf or hard of hearing

and in need of closed captioning services.

Scott Henson was in representing the Kansas Association of Elementary School Principals as well as the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Mr. Henson is the principal at Avondale West Elementary School in Topeka. He discussed education issues such as successful school programs, future funding needs and the No Child Left Behind Act.

Kansas State University representatives Fred Cholick, Dean of the College of Agriculture; Steven Graham, Assistant to the Dean; Jeff Davidson, Ag and Natural Resource County Agent from Greenwood County; Steve Irsik of Ingalls and Connie Pelton Kays of Pittsburg were in Washington, D.C., this week with the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. They were in my office to discuss research funding priorities for K-State and the importance of funding cooperative extension and related programs.

Gary Lortscher of Bern, Doyle Pearl of St. Mary's, Alan Stone of Overland Park and Tom Tunnell of Topeka were in representing the Kansas Grain and Feed Association and Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association to discuss their concerns facing the grain and feed industry and agribusiness retailers.

In my office from Salina were Sharon Ringler, Betty Rush and Sherry Denton to visit with me about child welfare services in western Kansas. The St. Francis Academy, which handles family preservation and foster care services in 53 western Kansas counties, has been awarded the Rural Service Award by the Child Welfare League of America. I am proud of the work that Sharon, Betty, Sherry and the St. Francis Academy have done on behalf of Kansas children.

Kristin Bowman-James, Heather Desaire and Doug Byers of Lawrence and Kristin Nicolaysen of Manhattan were in my office to discuss National Science Foundation Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) and National Institutes of Health Institutional Development Award (IDeA) grants. Funds awarded through these grants have helped further research at the University of Kansas and Kansas State University.

Kansas Credit Union Association representatives were in my office this week to talk about federal issues facing the credit union industry. In with the group from Wichita were Bill Dirks, Bob Thurman, Marla Marsh, Brad Herzet, Gary Regou and Marilyn Wells, as were Mark Keilig of Norton, Jim Holt of Valley Center, and Susan Shelby and Jerel Wright of Topeka. Wally Kearns and Stan Compton of Topeka and Fred Willich of Manhattan were in the office representing the Kansas Small Business Development Center to discuss future plans for the center and 2007 budget priorities.

City of Hutchinson representatives Carolyn Patterson, John Deardoff and Barry Law were in to provide an update on the Carey groundwater remediation and reverse osmosis project. John Schmidt of Marysville's Landoll Corporation was in to discuss the Army National Guard and Army Reserve's purchase of their 600 Series trailers. Some of these trailers will be used in Iraq and in assisting the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Melissa and Bryce Moore of Goddard and Rachel Murphy of Wichita stopped by my office to

share their support and appreciation of arthritis legislation I recently sponsored. Dwight Douglas, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe, was in my office to discuss funding for distance learning initiatives. Jeff Seibel of Hays was in representing Edwards Jones to discuss tax issues.

Sean Rafferty of Wichita, Linda Richardson of Great Bend, Myron Strom of Olathe and Darin Slack of Oakley were in representing the Kansas Association of County Office Employees to discuss current issues facing Kansas Farm Service Agency offices. Jason and Jon Kum of Salina were in Washington, D.C., participating in the Presidential Classroom program and stopped by to visit, as did Tanner Popp of Hoxie who was participating in the Congressional Youth Leadership Council program.

Dr. Bruce Douglas, President of Sterling College, was in to brief me on activities at Sterling College. In representing the Kansas Wing of the Civil Air Patrol were Colonel Barney King of Salina and Cadet Levi Lapping of Emporia to talk about homeland security issues and extending public safety officer benefits to members of the Civil Air Patrol.

In the office to discuss issues impacting Kansas Municipal Utilities, including railroads, telecommunications, hydropower and the Missouri River, were Colin Hansen of McPherson, Gary Shike of Oberlin, Brad Mears of Holton, Randy Riggs of Chanute and Bob Polys of Overland Park. In from Kansas City with the group were Joe Dick, Darrell Dorsey, Loretta Colombel and Bob Milan.

Representatives with the Kansas Association of Broadcasters were in to talk about television and radio broadcasting. They shared with me that they annually give more than \$300 million in free air time for public service endeavors. In with the group were Mark Vail of Hays, Ken Selvaggi and Harriet Lange of Topeka, and Dick Harlow and Kent Cornish of Wichita.

Joshua Campbell, Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, was in to discuss funding for AmericaView. This is a program that allows satellite images to be distributed to participating entities across the nation and converted into usable data for research, teaching and learning. Troy Shroeder with Kansas Rural Center in Albert stopped by my office this week while in Washington, D.C., as did John Thaemert of Sylvan Grove representing the National Association of Wheat Growers.

Very truly yours,

Jerry